

Multilingualism in post-Soviet Uzbekistan

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Uzbekistan Map

<http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/uzbekistan.html>



Uzbekistan: An Overview

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

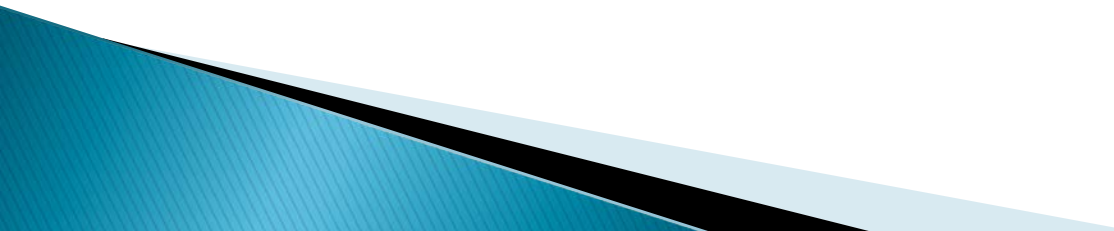
- ▶ **Location:** Central Asia, north of Afghanistan
- ▶ **Area:** 447, 400 sq km
- ▶ **Population:** 32.1 mil
- ▶ **Government type:** Republic, authoritarian presidential rule
- ▶ **Independence:** September 1, 1991 (from USSR)
- ▶ **Ethnic groups:** Uzbek (80%), Russian (2%), Tajik (5% (unofficial 20%)), Kazakh (3%), other (6.5 %)
- ▶ **Languages:** Uzbek (74.3%), Russian (14.2%), Tajik (4.4%), Other (7.1%)
- ▶ **Literacy:** *definition:* age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 99.3%

Historical Facts

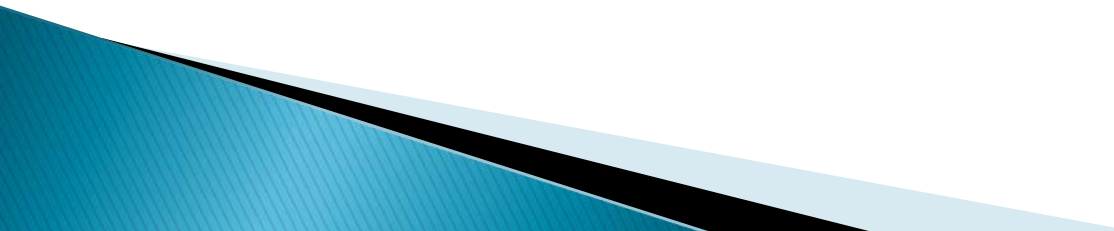
<https://www.infoplease.com/country/uzbekistan>

- ▶ Before the 4th century BC → part of the ancient Persian Empire
- ▶ 4th century BC → Macedonian invasion: conquered by Alexander the Great
- ▶ 8th century → Arab invasion; spread of Islam
- ▶ 13th century → Mongol invasion under Ghengis Khan
- ▶ 14th century → Turco-Mongolian invasion under Tamerlane the Great
- ▶ 19th century- Russian invasion
- ▶ 20th century (1924)- Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic

Theoretical Framework

- ▶ Multilingualism: “practices of using more than one language to varying degrees of proficiency, among individuals and societies” Michael Hornsby, 2014
 - ▶ Linguistic Landscape: “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on governmental buildings.” Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25
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Languages in Uzbekistan: Uzbek

- ▶ Prior to the early 20th century → a Turkic dialect, descendant of Chagatay.
 - ▶ 1924- Soviet Era: the “birth” of Uzbek as an official language of Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic.
 - ▶ 1928-30: Arabic alphabet was replaced by Latin alphabet.
 - ▶ 1930-40: “Russification” of the Uzbek vocabulary and phonetics.
 - ▶ 1940: Latin alphabet was replaced by Cyrillic.
 - ▶ 1989: Uzbek became the official language of the country.
 - ▶ 1993: Cyrillic was replaced by modified Latin alphabet.
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Languages in Uzbekistan: Russian

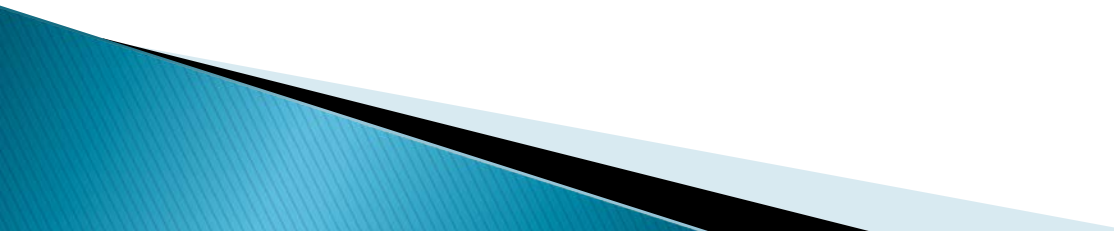
▶ 1924- 1990

- the language of prestige and supremacy
- International and interethnic language of communication
- Russification of Uzbek lexicon and phonetics
- Language of higher education, government, and economy

▶ 1990 – Present

- Linguistic cleansing: derussification of Uzbek
- Limited use of Russian in government
- Reduced numbers of Russian classes in the education sectors

Languages in Uzbekistan: Tajik

- ▶ Before the Mongol invasion- a lingua franca of Persian civilization, situated in present-day Uzbekistan.
 - ▶ Mother tongue of people living in Bukhara, Navai and Samarkand.
 - ▶ 5% of total population claims Tajik to be their mother tongue (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>).
 - ▶ Most ethnic tajiks register themselves as Uzbeks in order to have better social and economic advancement.
 - ▶ Has no official status in the country.
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Language in Uzbekistan: English


▶ 1930-1990:

- **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)** education was introduced in the early 1930s
- **Attitude towards English** –negative: English was considered as the language of capitalists and bourgeoisie
- **Variety of English-** British English

▶ 1990 – Present

- English became the most popular foreign language.
- Attitude towards English- positive; sign of modernism and elitism
- Variety of English- American English

Research Methodology

- ▶ Method: Qualitative
 - ▶ Roles of the Researcher: Observer, Interviewer
 - ▶ Research Sites: Bukhara City (downtown, city center)
 - ▶ Data Collection: Observations, Interviews
 - ▶ Data Analysis: Inductive (categories emerged from data)
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Evidence of Uzbek, Russian, and English









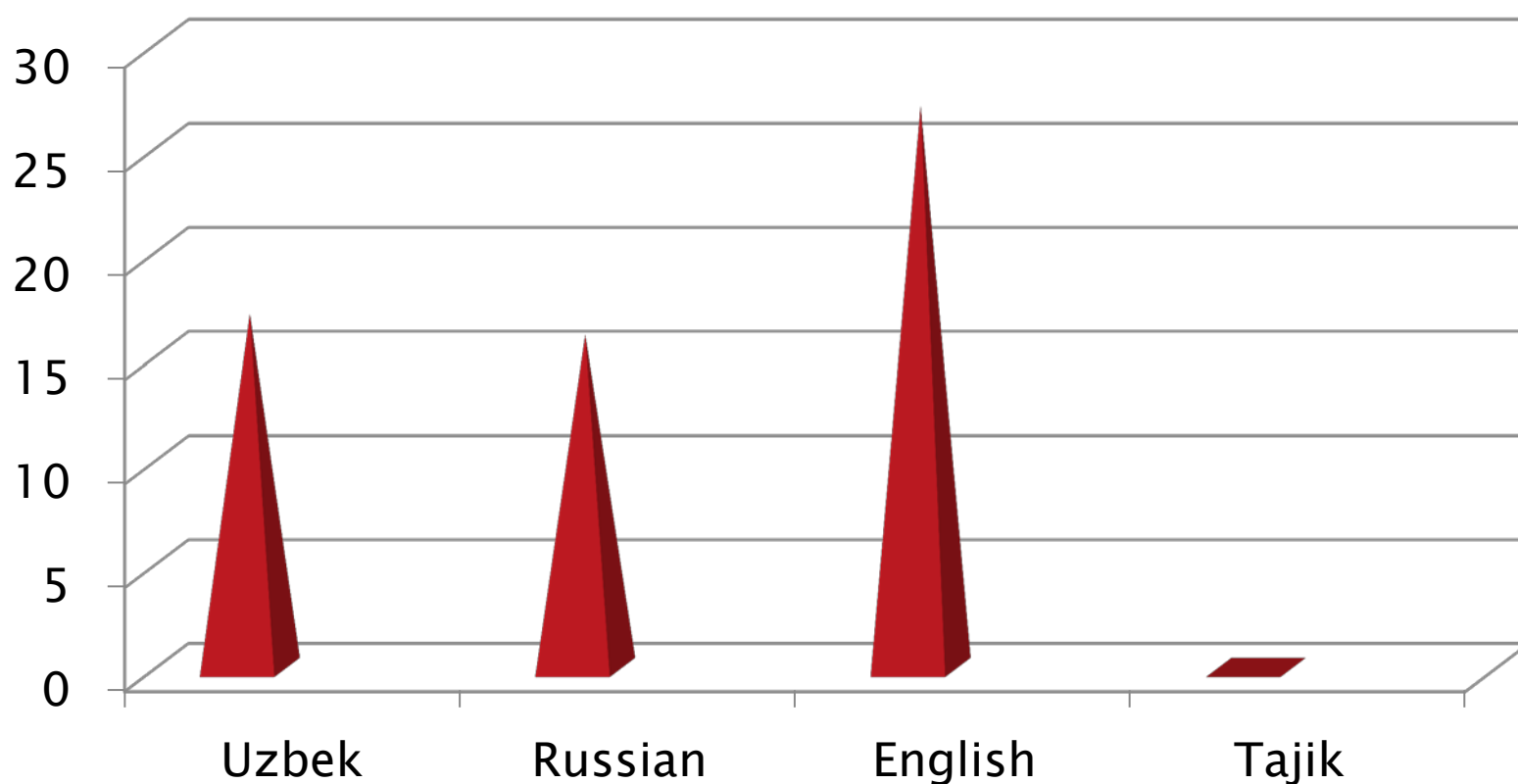




Summary of research findings

Total # of written signs: 60


Uzbek: 17 (28%), Russian: 16 (26%), English: 27 (45%), Tajik: 0



Summary of Research Findings: Public Signs

- ▶ **Uzbek:** It has been over 20 years since Uzbek became the only official language of the country; however, its presence on public signs and advertisement is not as strong as expected.
- ▶ **Russian:** the language officially lost its prominence since the collapse of the USSR; however, its presence on public signs is still significant.
- ▶ **English:** has no official status; however, became the most widely used FL since 1991. its presence on public signs is predominant.
- ▶ **Tajik:** mother tongue of local Bukharans; however, has neither official status nor presence on public signs and advertisement.

Summary of Research Findings: observations and Interviews

- ▶ **Local bazaars/markets:** bargaining mostly done in Tajik and Uzbek
 - ▶ **Public Transit:** conversations mostly conducted in Tajik and Uzbek
 - ▶ **Television and Radio:** mostly in Uzbek
 - ▶ **Government Offices:** communications and negotiations are conducted mostly in Tajik, but all paperwork is done in Uzbek
 - ▶ **Interviews:** Uzbek is the language of the government; it satisfies the language needs of the people who come to Bukhara from other regions of Uzbekistan
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Conclusion

- ▶ Multilingualism in Uzbekistan is more prominent today than ever before.
 - ▶ Uzbek is still competing with Russian in social and economic spheres.
 - ▶ English is rapidly entering the educational, social, and economic spheres of the country.
 - ▶ The status of Tajik has become ambiguous as a result of urbanization and immigration.
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